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ACTION: ARA-00

INFO	LOG-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	AID-00	INR-10	SS-00	CIAE-00
	H-01	NSCE-00	NSAE-00	HA-09	L-03	PM-10	PA-01
	OMB-01	USIE-00	SP-02	SNP-01	PRS-01	DS-01	DSE-00
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P 162223Z SEP 86
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2898
INFO DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN
RUEOGWA/193INFBDE FT CLAYTON PN
RUEORMA/470THMI FT CLAYTON PN
AFOSI HOWARD AFB PN DOI
AFIN LIAISON OFFICE ALBROOK AFB PN
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
☒ Release () ☐ Excise () ☐ Deny ☒ Declassify
Date 2/27/02 Exemption _____

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, PM
SUBJ: SPADAFORA ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION ATTRACTS
- MODEST PUBLIC ATTENTION

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: A WEEK OF OPPOSITION-SPONSORED OBSERVANCES CULMINATED SEPTEMBER 13 IN A SPECIAL MASS ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE BRUTAL MURDER OF HUGO SPADAFORA. THE OPPOSITION MEDIA TRIED TO MAKE MUCH OF THE ANNIVERSARY AND THE PANAMA DEFENSE FORCES' (FDP) COMPLICITY IN THE STILL UNRESOLVED CASE, BUT -- EXCEPT FOR THE MASS ITSELF -- THERE WAS LITTLE PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE MATTER. THE FDP/GOP DID NOTHING TO IMPEDE THE COMMEMORATION, BUT THE FDP-CONTROLLED ERSА PRESS REPLAYED ALLEGATIONS THAT

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SPADAFORA WAS A VICTIM OF NARCOTICS OR ARMS TRAFFICKERS, OF MIDDLE EAST TERRORISTS, OR OF FELLOW ANTISANDINISTA EDEN PASTORA.
END SUMMARY.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF SPADAFORA MURDER OBSERVED

3. THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE MURDER OF HUGO SPADAFORA, GUERRILLA FIGHTER FOR VARIOUS CAUSES AND A DECLARED ENEMY OF PANAMA DEFENSE FORCES (FDP) COMMANDING GENERAL MANUEL ANTONIO NORIEGA WAS

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OBSERVED SEPTEMBER 13. DURING THE PRECEDING WEEK -- LABELED "DAYS OF REFLECTION" BY ITS ORGANIZERS -- THE SPADAFORA FAMILY, FRIENDS AND POLITICAL SYMPATHIZERS CARRIED OUT A SERIES OF PUBLIC SEMINARS, MARCHES, VIGILS AND RELIGIOUS SERVICES DESIGNED TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE ALLEGED RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FDP FOR SPADAFORA'S KIDNAPPING, TORTURE AND DECAPITATION. SINCE THE GOP QUASHED THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION AFTER TWO MONTHS, ACTUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SLAYING HAS NEVER BEEN ESTABLISHED, ALTHOUGH MOST PANAMANIAN CONCEDE THAT FDP OFFICIALS IN FACT WERE THE GUILTY PARTIES. THE OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO POINT TO NORIEGA HIMSELF, AT THE VERY LEAST, AS THE INTELLECTUAL AUTHOR OF THE CRIME. WINSTON SPADAFORA, THE MURDERED MAN'S BROTHER, DECLARED ON SEPTEMBER 12, "EVEN IF NORIEGA DID NOT GIVE THE ORDER FOR HUGO'S DETENTION AND SUBSEQUENT DECAPITATION, HE -- NORIEGA -- SURELY KNOWS EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN PANAMA; HE KNOWS PERFECTLY WELL HOW THE CRIME OCCURRED."

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4. THE COMMEMORATIVE WEEK BEGAN WITH AN UNPLANNED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND AN FDP UNIT IN CHITRE, SPADAFORA'S BIRTHPLACE, AN EVENT WHICH COULD HAVE -- BUT DID NOT -- SET THE TONE FOR THE ENTIRE WEEK'S EVENTS. FDP PERSONNEL ARRIVING TO PAINT A LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL WERE GREETED BY STUDENTS SHOUTING PRO-SPADAFORA AND ANTI-FDP SLOGANS. NO VIOLENCE ENSUED, HOWEVER, AND THE SOLDIERS COMPLETED THEIR JOB WITHOUT FURTHER INTERRUPTION. THE REST OF THE WEEK PASSED WITHOUT MUCH PUBLIC ATTENTION, ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSITION MEDIA DID ITS BEST TO PLAY UP THE PROGRAMMED EVENTS.

5. THE CULMINATION OF THE COMMEMORATIVE WEEK WAS A SPECIAL MASS AT A PANAMA CITY CHURCH PRESIDED OVER BY PANAMA'S AUXILIARY BISHOP OSCAR BROWN AND ATTENDED BY EX-PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER RICARDO ARIAS CALDERON AND A HOST OF OTHER OPPOSITION POLITICAL AND MEDIA LEADERS. IN HIS CAREFULLY WORDED HOMILY, BISHOP BROWN CALLED FOR THE PERPETRATORS OF THE CRIME TO STEP FORWARD AND RECEIVE THE CHURCH'S ABSOLUTION AND FOR AN IMPARTIAL, EXHAUSTIVE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION TO BE CARRIED OUT. THE MASS ATTRACTED AN OVERFLOW CROWD, MAKING IT THE HIGH POINT OF AN OTHERWISE UNREMARKABLE WEEK OF ACTIVITIES.

AN OFFICIAL COUNTER-CAMPAIGN

6. DURING RECENT WEEKS OPPOSITIONISTS HAD CONTENTENDED

THAT THE FDP AND PRO-GOVERNMENT GROUPS WOULD SEEK

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TO UPSTAGE THE SPADAFORA OBSERVANCES, AND POINTED TO EVIDENCE (SUPPORTED BY SIGNS IN VARIOUS PANAMA CITY NEIGHBORHOODS) THAT THE FDP WOULD SPONSOR AN ATHLETIC COMPETITION IN CHITRE ON SEPTEMBER 13. THIS EVENT NEVER MATERIALIZED, HOWEVER. ON SEPTEMBER 11, THE FDP-CONTROLLED (ERSA) DAILY LA REPUBLICA INCLUDED A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT WHICH REPRODUCED PURPORTEDLY UNPUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SPADAFORA AND NICARAGUAN REVOLUTIONARY EDEN PASTORA, AS WELL AS A FULL COLOR COMIC-BOOK STYLE BIOGRAPHY OF THE SLAIN PANAMANIAN, SUGGESTING THAT RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO MEN HAD PROVOKED SPADAFORA'S ASSASSINATION BY PASTORA LOYALISTS. THE ERSAPRESS ALSO

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RESURRECTED ITS PREVIOUS ALLEGATIONS THAT SPADAFORA
-- DESCRIBED AS A BOMB-WIELDING ADVENTURER -- HAD
BEEN MURDERED EITHER BY NARCOTICS OR ARMS TRAFFICKERS
OR BY PALESTINIAN OR LIBYAN TERRORISTS.

COMMENT

7. PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE SPADAFORA CASE WANED LATE
LAST YEAR, AND THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION HAS BEEN
UNABLE TO REVIVE IT. THE OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO
ATTEMPT TO CAST SPADAFORA IN THE UNLIKELY ROLE OF
A MARTYR FOR JUSTICE IN THE HANDS OF A BRUTAL
MILITARY REGIME. HOWEVER, THE FDP HAS BEEN ABLE TO
CLOSE RANKS IN DEFENSE OF THE INSTITUTION AND IN-
DIVIDUALS SUSPECTED OF COMPLICITY IN THE CRIME.
JUDGING BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S INDIFFERENCE TO THE
ANNIVERSARY EVENTS, THE SPADAFORA EPISODE HAS
PLAYED ITSELF OUT AND, BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOP-
MENTS, THERE SEEMS NO LIKELIHOOD OF REVIVAL OF
GENERAL INTEREST IN IT.
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